

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 212 660

TM 820 055

AUTHOR Pitts, Marcella
TITLE The Relationship of Classroom Instructional Characteristics and Writing in the Descriptive/Narrative Mode.
INSTITUTION California Univ., Los Angeles. Center for the Study of Evaluation.
SPONS AGENCY National Inst. of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE Nov 78
GRANT OB-NIE-G-78-0213
NOTE 89p.; A portion of Appendix A, Student Questionnaire on Use of Instructional Variables, is marginally legible due to small print.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC04 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Descriptive Writing; Educational Objectives; Feedback; High Schools; Secondary School Teachers; *Teaching Methods; Time on Task; *Writing (Composition); Writing Exercises; *Writing Instruction; Writing Skills

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the proposed study was to examine relationships between instructional characteristics in required high school composition classrooms and quality of writing in one of the four domains included in the curriculum, the imaginative/narrative domain. Questionnaire data were collected on objectives, writing activities, and specific writing skills to which instructional time is devoted; frequency and type of writing practice provided; and grading procedures employed. These data were examined in relation to students' writing performance as measured by the ratings assigned to the student essay samples written for this study. Teachers of average-ability writing classes were more concerned with grammar and mechanics, and offered more in-class assignments. Above-average class teachers spent more time in individual conferences, assigned longer papers, and provided more specific suggestions for improvement. Tracking, or class assignment, was the single significant variable related to variability in student writing scores. (Author/BW)

* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *

ED212660

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as
received from the person or organization
originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve
reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this docu-
ment do not necessarily represent official NIE
position or policy.

DELIVERABLE: November 1978

STUDIES IN MEASUREMENT AND METHODOLOGY

Work Unit 1:

Design and Use of Tests

Eva L. Baker and Edys Quellmalz
Project Directors

THE RELATIONSHIP OF CLASSROOM INSTRUCTIONAL CHARACTERISTICS
AND WRITING IN THE DESCRIPTIVE/NARRATIVE MODE

Marcella Pitts

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

G.S. Gray

Grant Number:
OB-NIE-G-78-0213

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Center for the Study of Evaluation
Graduate School of Education
University of California, Los Angeles

TM 820 055

The work upon which this publication is based was performed pursuant to a grant with the National Institute of Education, Department of Health, Education and Welfare. Points of view or opinions stated do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

STUDY 2

THE RELATIONSHIP OF CLASSROOM INSTRUCTIONAL CHARACTERISTICS AND WRITING IN THE DESCRIPTIVE/NARRATIVE MODE

INTRODUCTION

The Problem

Despite the fact that they may never be asked to write a composition or essay, most people need to develop writing competency. Skill in writing is needed for post-secondary education as well as for many occupations and professions. Indeed, the ability to communicate effectively in written form is considered a basic educational survival skill (Daly & Miller, 1975).

Mounting evidence suggests, however, that many students have not acquired this skill by the time they graduate from high school. A comparison of the writing of a national sample of 9, 13, and 17 year olds in 1969 and 1974 showed across-the-board evidence of decreased writing skills (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 1975). In general, the 1974 student essays contained simpler vocabulary, had a primer-like style and were judged to be less coherent than the essays written by students in the past (Mellon, 1976; Beshoar, 1976). Only the 9 year olds did better than the 1969 group, with the proportion of good writers increasing in 1974. The essays of 13 and 17 year olds, in contrast, were marked by more awkward sentence structure and increased use of run-on sentences. Although these results do not establish the existence of a downward trend, they contribute to the evidence which strongly suggests that writing skills are declining --evidence such as lower scores on the writing portions of college entrance exams and college professors' testimony of the declining writing skills of entering freshmen (Mellon, 1976). Widely publicized data concerning

students' writing skills (e.g., Newsweek, 1975, 1976; Mead, 1976) have resulted in a growing public consensus that students do not write as well as they once did and that their skills must be improved (Webster & Nimitz, 1976).

Many reasons for students' poor writing performance have been suggested. In 1976 a special Ad Hoc Committee on Student Writing in California was appointed to discuss probable causes of the decline in students' writing skills. Among the causes the Committee cited were various societal factors. First, students are reading less because of television. Secondly, new means of communication and media have lessened the need to communicate in written form. Therefore, students attach less importance to writing. Thirdly, many students have difficulty composing because it is a highly ordered process, and their environments have not prepared them to cope with such highly ordered processes. The Committee also cited various school-related reasons for students' poor writing performance. These included less attention to the teaching of writing in the schools, larger classes, inadequate preparation of composition teachers, and elective programs which frequently do not include the study of language and composition.

These school-based factors have become the focus of growing attention both within the education community and outside of it. Since the non-school related factors contributing to the decline in students' writing performance do not seem amenable to control, attention has centered on improving the quality of the composition instruction provided in schools. To this end, many school districts are developing required composition courses to assure that all students have acquired basic competencies in writing prior to graduating from high school. A typical example of this type of course is

one designed by Los Angeles City Schools (1976). The course is meant to teach students the structural features of competent writing which are non-mode specific as well as the stylistic and rhetorical aspects of writing in each of four domains: (1) the sensory/descriptive; (2) the imaginative/narrative; (3) the practical/informative; and (4) the expository/argumentative. It is structured so that equal emphasis is given to each of the writing domains during the course.

The Purpose

The purpose of the proposed study was to examine relationships between instructional characteristics in required composition classrooms and quality of writing in one of the four domains included in the curriculum, the imaginative/narrative domain. Given the apparent decline in students' writing performance and the recent development of required composition courses in response to it, the descriptive information the study yields is especially timely. Furthermore, it makes a unique contribution to our knowledge of instructional dimensions in composition classes since this setting has been the subject of little systematic investigation. Most of the currently available information has come from studies of English classrooms, a different instructional context where the development and refinement of students' writing skills is not the primary instructional objective as it is in the composition classroom.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

Instructional Characteristics Selected for Study

As research in various subject areas and with students of different ages and ability levels suggests, certain instructional variables seem to be positively and consistently related to achievement. These include task description, use of instructional time, practice and knowledge of results.

Task Description. A task description is a medium of communication between the teacher and student, the purpose of which is to provide some direction for students' learning (Baker & Quellmalz, 1972; Bloom, 1976). As an instructional variable, task description would seem to fit into the class of variables termed orienting stimuli (Rothkopf, 1970; Frase, 1970). These stimuli activate inspection behaviors on the part of the student, which in turn facilitate learning. As an orienting stimulus, a task description is analogous to questions (Frase, 1970) and advance organizers (Ausubel, 1968).

By informing learners of exactly what is expected of them, a task description assists learners in discriminating between relevant and incidental or illustrative content. As a study by Rothkopf & Kaplan (1972) illustrates, learning from texts was facilitated for the learner with a precise statement of what he was expected to learn. Since this statement (verbal or written) is a simplified version of the teacher's instructional goals, a clear formulation of instructional intent by the teacher is a precondition for effective task description (Popham & Baker, 1970). According to Bloom (1976), any instructional cue the learner receives should: (1) include instruction as to what is to be learned and what the student is to do in the learning process; (2) draw the student's attention to what is to be learned rather than other

competing aspects of the environment, and (3) state the task in language the student can understand and comprehend. In a review of more than 20 studies, Bloom found a positive relationship between these qualities and final achievement (+.38) and gains in achievement (= .53). These results have been corroborated by other reviews of research on a number of preinstructional strategies including pretests, objectives, overviews, and organizers (Hartley & Davies, 1976; Duchastel & Merrill, 1973). In general, informing students of what they can expect during instruction appears to be a useful instructional strategy.

Use of Instructional Time. As is true of task description, the positive relationship between instructional time devoted to academic content and student achievement has been supported in a number of studies (Dunkin & Biddle, 1974; Rosenshine & Furst, 1973). Recently its relationship to improved performance in basic skills has been demonstrated in studies of reading and math instruction for primary grade pupils from low socioeconomic backgrounds (Berliner & Rosenshine, 1976; Rosenshine, 1976). For these students, time spent in math or reading and time spent on academic activities yielded positive, significant, and consistent correlations with achievement, while time spent in other activities almost always yielded negative results. Although many of these studies involved direct observation of teachers' use of instructional time (e.g., Soar, 1973; Stallings & Kaskowitz, 1974, in Berliner & Rosenshine, 1976), in at least one self-report, data on use of instructional time was collected from teachers (Harris & Serwer, 1961). As with the other studies, the significant feature that emerged was the amount of time per day spent on academic activities. In another study Chang and Rath (1971) report that part of the difference in the achievement of middle

class and lower class schools on a standardized test of basic skills is due to the amount of time devoted to basic skills. Middle class schools in this study placed greater emphasis on basic skills (as defined by the Iowa Test of Basic Skills) than did lower class schools. Moreover, they placed greater emphasis on the skills that resulted in the differences between the schools' performance. The emphasis placed on non-discriminating skills was similar in both settings.

Practice. This principle is closely related to task description and use of instructional time. The student must have an opportunity to practice the behaviors or skills the teacher wants the student to demonstrate until they become part of his repertoire (Baker & Quellmalz, 1972; Bloom, 1976). In fact, "of the many principles from the field of instructional psychology that a teacher can utilize, perhaps the most important is that of appropriate practice" (Popham & Baker, 1970). The instructional effectiveness of practice has been supported in a number of research studies (Wallen & Travers, 1963; Rosenshine, 1972).

That students differ in the amount of time and practice they need to reach a criterion of mastery has also been supported (Carroll, 1963; Bloom, 1976; Glaser, 1968; Atkinson, 1968). It has been estimated that some students may need five times as much time as do other students to reach mastery. On the other hand, if students begin a learning task with the necessary cognitive entry behaviors, mounting evidence suggests that the amount of practice required to reach a criterion level of achievement is similar across students (Bloom, 1974). In a recent review, Bloom (1976) examined a number of studies which have included measures of practice in the form of observer ratings and

student reports. When the class was the unit of analysis, the correlation between achievement and practice was $+0.27$. This correlation was higher and consistently positive when the individual student was the unit of analysis.

Knowledge of Results. As Glaser (1963) observed, practice as such does not change behavior, but practice conditions which supply consequences of an individual's actions do modify behavior. If the students are informed about the success or failure of their attempts during practice, they are able to either confirm their expectations concerning their performance or alter their behavior to meet these expectations.

Knowledge of results can be of two types; confirmation or feedback. Confirmation generally provides a statement about the correctness or incorrectness of a student's answer and is the minimal kind of knowledge of results with which students can be provided (Gagne & Briggs, 1973). Feedback is more complex and instructionally potent since it tells the student why a particular response is right or wrong. Essentially it provides additional instruction.

A frequently investigated problem in relation to this variable is the effect of immediate and delayed knowledge of results. The optimal interval appears to vary according to the type of task to be learned, the phase of learning during which knowledge of results is provided, and the criterion measure (i.e. immediate versus delayed recall) (Sassenrath, 1975). Nevertheless, students should receive knowledge of results within a time interval which permits review of concepts while they are still fresh in their minds.

That learning is facilitated by providing this information is a well-established principle based on an extensive body of literature in education and experimental psychology (Gagne & Briggs, 1974; Gagne, 1965). As Chapanis (1965) observes, "That knowledge of results improves performance is perhaps one of the most dependable and thoroughly tested principles in modern psychology. The principle holds for man and animals, groups as well as individuals, and for a wide variety of learning, psychomotor, monitoring, and other general performance tasks."

Thus, communicating the precise skill or behavior the student is to demonstrate (task definition), devoting instructional time to these skills (use of instructional time), providing occasions to practice the skills (practice), and coupling practice with feedback (knowledge of results) are effective instructional strategies. They have been incorporated into instructional sequences and products (Baker & Quellmalz 1972; Gagne & Briggs, 1973; Bloom, 1976) and are included in several models of learning such as those proposed by Carroll (1963), Cooley and Leinhardt (1975) and Rosenshine (1976).

Overview of the Study

In an effort to characterize the composition instruction provided in this required course, the study used a methodology not commonly employed in past descriptive studies of composition instruction. First, data were obtained on: (1) objectives, writing activities, and specific writing skills to which instructional time is devoted; (2) frequency and type of writing practice provided; and (3) grading procedures employed. Secondly, much of this information was examined to assess the relationship between variables which have been shown to be powerful influences on the delivery

of instruction and on students' performance. The study examined:

- . How the instructional variables of task description, practice, knowledge of results, and allocation of instructional time to specific writing skills are used in the composition classroom.
- . The relationship between the use of task description, practice, knowledge of results, instructional time spent on writing skills, and students' writing performance.

Research Questions

The study focused upon the following research questions:

1. Are selected instructional principles employed in the composition classroom?
 - a. Task description: Are the writing competencies or skills students are expected to demonstrate communicated to them?
 - b. Use of instructional time: To what writing activities, modes of discourse, and specific writing skills do teachers devote instructional time?
 - c. Practice: What kind of writing practice is provided for students? Frequency? Length and type of assignment?
 - d. Knowledge of results: Within what period of time are students' papers read by teachers and returned? What kind of knowledge of results do students receive? Are they provided with feedback to guide revision and/or subsequent writing practice?
2. What is the relationship between students' writing performance and the:
 - a. provision of a description of the skills/attitudes which they are expected to exhibit?
 - b. instructional time spent on specific writing skills?
 - c. frequency of writing practice?

- d. provision of feedback on papers to guide revision and/or subsequent writing practice?

The answers to these research questions were obtained by using an approach which is similar to the one employed by Squire and Applebee (1966). Composition teachers and their students were asked to provide information concerning the activities provided in Contemporary Composition and the use of instructional principles listed above.

This self-report information, gathered by student and teacher questionnaires, provided comprehensive data on instruction in this setting. Furthermore, the data from the students in each class provided an additional perspective on the teacher's self-report of instructional practices.

The questionnaire data were examined in relation to students' writing performance as measured by the ratings assigned to the student essay samples written for this study. In this way the investigator was able to report information concerning possible relationships between instructional variables and student performance.

METHOD

Selection of the General Sample

The subjects of the study were the students and teachers in nineteen Contemporary Composition classes in five high schools in the Los Angeles School District. The selection of the schools in the sample was based on achievement and demographic data published annually by the district. Performance data for the California Test of Basic Skills (CTBS), a standardized achievement battery which is administered district-wide, are reported for individual schools as are figures pertaining to the transiency, stability, and ethnic makeup of their populations. These data were used to assemble profiles of individual schools. Five schools were selected for inclusion in this study based upon their relatively homogeneous profiles along these dimensions. The achievement test scores and the stability, transiency, and minority enrollment figures for each selected school are presented in Table 1. The achievement scores indicated these schools were achieving at or near the national norm percentiles. The transiency and stability figures were similar across schools. With regard to ethnic makeup, minority enrollment was over 50 percent in schools two and five, less than 23 percent in schools one and three, and approximately 30 percent in school four.

The number of Contemporary Composition classes participating ranged between three and four per school for a total of nineteen classes. Participation was voluntary, with the decision to take part in the study resting with the individual teachers. Table 2 indicates how the classes are tracked using the schools' categories for student placement: above average, average, below average.

TABLE 1

ACHIEVEMENT AND DEMOGRAPHIC DATA FOR SAMPLE SCHOOLS

<u>School</u>		<u>Quartile</u>	<u>National Norm Percentiles - Reading*</u>
1		N	656
transiency	29%	Q3	76
stability	73%	md	51(-)
minority	18%	Q1	31
2		N	810
transiency	34%	Q3	74
stability	72%	md	46(-)
minority	57%	Q1	21
3		N	577
transiency	24%	Q3	74
stability	75%	md	51(+)
minority	22%		29
4		N	527
transiency	31%	Q3	74
stability	65%	md	51(-)
minority	31%	Q1	29
5		N	836
transiency	20%	Q3	74
stability	81%	md	50(+)
minority	54%	Q1	23

(+, -) Symbols in parentheses indicate school median percentile gain (+) or loss (-) as compared to 1976.

* CTBS, Forms Level 4, Figures from Report on the District Testing Program 1976-1977, Publication Number 362. Research and Evaluation Branch of the Los Angeles Unified School District, August, 1977.

TABLE 2
SAMPLING DESIGN

<u>School</u>	<u>Classroom</u>	<u>Number of Students (N=330)</u>	<u>Class "Tracking" Level</u>		
			<u>Above Average</u>	<u>Average</u>	<u>Below Average</u>
1	1	16	x		
	2	18			x
	3	18		x	
	4	22		x	
2	5	19		x	
	6	19	x		
	7	21		x	
	8	19		x	
3	9	21	x		
	10	8	x		
	11	15		x	
4	12	18	x		
	13	14		x	
	14	12		x	
	15	14		x	
5	16	18		x	
	17	26	x		
	18	19		x	
	19	16			x
5	19	330	6	11	2

The teacher and students in each selected class completed an instructional questionnaire; students also wrote two descriptive/narrative essays.

Selection of essay sample. Although a large number of compositions were collected, the number of essays evaluated was restricted by budgetary requirements to twelve essays per class, making a total of 228 rated essays. The essay sample was randomly drawn by selecting from each class six students who had written both essays and completed the questionnaire.

Curriculum under study. The nineteen classes in this study were all implementing a common curriculum, Contemporary Composition. This course is a one semester composition class required by the district for high school graduation. Incorporated into the high school curriculum at the eleventh grade level, Contemporary Composition is designed:

"to increase success of the high school student in writing through strengthening practical skills and helping students to think clearly; to exercise creativity and imaginative extension; to promote integration of thought and feeling; and to develop self-knowledge and self-confidence." (Los Angeles City Schools, 1976.)

The course curriculum outline prescribes activities in each of the four domains of written discourse. The domains, as defined in the outline, are:

- 1) sensory/descriptive domain which draws its data from concrete details as it recreates the qualities of an experience by accurately and vividly recording impressions gained through the senses;
- 2) the imaginative/narrative domain which organizes events or actions involving characters, objects and setting into some meaningful time sequence;
- 3) practical/informative domain which uses language for utilitarian purposes and whose primary purpose is to record events, directions, and ideas in clear and concise language

addressed to a particular reader and intended to bring about a specific response; and 4) the analytic/expository domain which analyzes and/or explains a character, process, idea or conviction by a logical and often psychologically effective arrangement of details, examples, reasons or arguments.

The recommended minimum number of compositions for each domain is three, making the minimal number of finished compositions for the course twelve. Although individual teachers can sequence these assignments as they desire, the curriculum outline treats each domain in the order listed above. This sequential treatment suggested the earlier domains, sensory/descriptive and imaginative/narrative, as the most suitable for study since it was likely that teachers would have provided instruction in these by late May when the study was to be conducted.

Procedure

Data collection took place during the last two weeks in May, 1978. Visits to each school were scheduled to provide an interval of approximately one week between writing assignments. Assistance during data collection was provided by nine graduate students in the School of Education at UCLA.

Two samples of writing were collected from each subject. Forty minutes writing time was allotted for each writing occasion; order of topics was counterbalanced by class. Teachers provided the investigator with a set of previously graded student compositions. After both the writing samples and sets of graded papers had been collected, students and teachers completed the questionnaires. Students were given approximately twenty minutes in class for this purpose.

Independent Variables

The independent variables in the study are: 1) task description; 2) instructional time; 3) practice; and 4) knowledge of results. Self-report information concerning each of these instructional variables was gathered from teachers and students via questionnaires. Development of all questionnaire items was based upon the curriculum guide for Contemporary Composition (Los Angeles City Schools) and survey instruments used in previous research (Gillis, 1977; Bamberg, 1976; Squire and Applebee, 1966). Draft versions of the questionnaires were reviewed by CSE staff.

In addition, the student questionnaire was pilot tested with a group of students (n=27) in a high school composition course similar to the course under study. Students' responses to items relating to practice, task description and knowledge of results showed considerable consensus which indicated that these items were functioning in the desired manner, i.e., they were interpreted by students in the same way. These items were retained for the final questionnaire. Modifications were made in the response options pertaining to amount of instructional time devoted to specific features of writing and to number of assignments of various types. This was done to assure that the response options were phrased in units that were meaningful to students. The teacher and student questionnaires are included in the Appendix A.

Task description. The first independent variable measured by the questionnaires, task description, is operationally defined as informing students of the skills they are to acquire as a result of instruction. In order to ascertain the extent to which teachers had successfully

communicated this information, teachers and students were provided with parallel lists of post-instructional skills and asked to select those which matched most closely the skills students were to have at the end of the semester. An index was computed to measure the agreement between the skills selected by students and teachers. This index was calculated by taking the square root of the mean squared difference between the skills selected by students and teachers. These skills included:

- Employ appropriate vocabulary (variety, precision, suitability to topic, audience)
- Use correct spelling
- Maintain consistency in tone, person, point of view
- Use correct grammar and sentence structure
- Use a variety of sentence lengths and beginnings in their writing
- Write a complete sentence that clearly expresses a thought
- Write a clear unified paragraph
- Write a coherent multi-paragraph paper
- Express ideas with originality in style, diction and expression
- Listen carefully and observe the world around them
- Support topics with details, examples, evidence
- Follow accepted standards of English usage
- Speak effectively in front of a group
- Maintain coherence and use transitions effectively

Instructional time. The second independent variable is instructional time. It is operationally defined as the amount of time spent on the types of writing assignments and on the features of writing related to description, narrative order and mechanics, i.e., the focus of the analytic rating scale developed for the study. The first version of the variable required teachers and students to indicate the number of assignments for each type of writing. The second indicator of the variable was measured by parallel items which required students and teachers to indicate the number of class

periods spent on each of the features of writing.

An apriori grouping of these features by subscale was tested as an initial step in the data analysis by examining the inter-correlations between these features which were based on both students' and teachers' reports. The apriori classification was modified on the basis of the correlation matrices and the features were grouped into three rather than five categories:

1. Descriptive Features
setting
physical characterization
psychological characterization
2. Narrative Order
sequencing of events
transitions
opening and closing sentences
3. Mechanics
sentence structure: fluence, variety, correctness
diction
spelling
punctuation

For data analysis purposes, the average amount of time on the features in each category was calculated to obtain estimates of time spent on descriptive features, narrative order and mechanics for teachers and students.

Practice. The third independent variable, practice, is defined as the amount of writing, i.e., frequency and length of assignments done in-class and as homework. Categories for frequency of writing practice were: daily; twice a week; weekly; once every two weeks; monthly; once/twice a semester;

never. Categories for average length of writing assignments included: two or more pages; one page; less than one page.

Knowledge of results. The fourth independent variable, knowledge of results is defined as the helpfulness, instructiveness and immediacy of the feedback given students concerning their writing performance.

The first dimension, immediacy of feedback, was measured by parallel questionnaire items in which teachers and students estimated the time period within which students' papers were usually read and returned. Response categories included: one day; two to three days; one week; two to three weeks; one month.

An item on the student questionnaire also provided a measure of the directiveness or instructiveness of feedback. The scale, ranging from 1 to 4, was developed for students' responses to the following item:

"What kinds of comments does your teacher usually write on your papers?"

1. My teacher doesn't write comments on my compositions.
2. One or two general comments such as "Good, neat work", "Much improved", "You can do better than this".
3. Comments which point out weaknesses or strengths in the paper such as "Poorly organized", "You don't support what you say with details", "Good use of description".
4. Comments which give me a rule to follow or which tell me what to do to correct my error such as "State your main idea at the beginning and support it in the body of the paper".

Dependent Measures

Writing tasks. The writing tasks in the study were closely related to the sensory/descriptive and imaginative/narrative domains described in the Contemporary Composition curriculum outline. Both of the writing topics used pictures as writing stimuli. The selection of the pictures and the

development of the directions for the two assignments were based on data from two field tests with comparable groups of students.

Students were directed to write about the scene in the picture and the events which might have preceded and followed it. They were told to include in their essays descriptive detail for readers who would not have an opportunity to look at the pictures. Further, students were directed to use the third person point of view. They were told that the purpose of the assignment was to write a story based on the picture and to include descriptive detail related to setting, characters, and action.

Analytic rating scale. A descriptive/narrative analytic rating scale was developed and used to evaluate students' essays. The features included on the scale were derived from a survey of theoretical and practical works on descriptive and narrative writing as modes of discourse and from an examination of published rating scales.

The first step in developing the scale was a review of the available theoretical and practical work on descriptive and narrative writing. This review resulted in the identification of four essential features of descriptive/narrative writing that are appropriate criteria for evaluating relatively short pieces written in a timed test situation.

The first feature is setting. Its elements include: actual geographic location; time period in which the action takes place; the general environment of the characters (e.g., moral, emotional); and the occupations and daily manner of living of the people.

The second feature is characterization, an element in narrative writing which the writer can accomplish in a variety of ways. These include: presenting the character through the author's exposition; through actions allowing the reader to make inferences about the character; or by representing,

from the character's viewpoint, emotions and the impact of actions.

The third feature, action, is a series of events which move from a beginning through a related sequence to a logical and natural outcome. The events should be coherently sequenced so they are meaningful. This implies that individual events belong to a related body of events, all of which bear on the point of the action. The events are stages in a process, and narration gives the process a time unit in which to unfold.

The fourth feature is descriptive detail, the inclusion of which contributes to the reader's sense of the setting, the characters and the sequence of events.

The selection of features to include in the rating scale is further supported by a state-of-the-art review of the published analytic rating scales relevant to descriptive/narrative writing. The first scale, the Personal Narrative Writing Scale (Cooper, 1977) was developed by English teachers and designed for use with autobiography. Although one feature, author's role, is specific to personal narrative, other features such as central figure, background and sequence are related to the general mode of narrative writing. The scale has been used extensively in classrooms by students to guide peer feedback but has not been used in a research setting; hence reliability data are not available.

A second scale, the Glaser Narrative Composition Scale (Glaser, 1968), is designed to assess the literary quality of creative writing by intermediate grade children. It has been used in a research setting, and an overall inter-rater reliability of $r=.83$ has been reported for three judges. The features on this scale include: plot (organization, beginning, middle, end); internal logic; inclusion of detail; theme; setting; and characterization.

A review of the non-mode specific features of these and other prominent

analytic rating scales was also undertaken to identify elements related to mechanics for inclusion in the scale. The features related to mechanics on the Personal Narrative Writing Scale are diction, syntax, and mechanics (usage, punctuation, and spelling). Those on the Glaser Scale are title, fluency and variety of sentence structure, connectives, figurative language, names and pronouns. Common elements of the well-known Diederich Rating Scale (Diederich, 1974), the California Essay Scale (Nail, et al, 1960) and a dichotomous rating scale developed by Cohen (1972) are spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, usage/diction. The evaluative criteria in the curriculum outline for Contemporary Composition (Los Angeles City Schools, 1976) includes: grammar/usage; spelling; punctuation and sentence structure.

Based on this review, a sentence structure/diction subscale and a grammar/spelling subscale were developed. The criteria on the first scale include fluency and variety of sentence structure, the selection of clear and specific words and their correct use. The focus of the grammar dimension of the grammar/spelling subscale is on reference errors, tense shifts, correct punctuation, misplaced modifiers, unintentional fragments and comma splices. These five subscales and scoring criteria are included in the Appendix.

Scores for each subscale range from one (low) to four (high). In all cases, a "one" is assigned to those essays in which the writer demonstrates little or no facility with a particular subscale feature. A rating of "two" corresponds to a minimal level of competence or to the minimal treatment of a feature; "three" is reserved for competent treatment of each writing feature. Finally, papers receive a "four" rating if the treatment of a feature is competent and marked by a highly developed quality. Thus, for the analytic scale, the highest possible score is twenty points, or a perfect score of "four" in each of the five subscales.

Draft versions of the scale were reviewed by a faculty member in the UCLA English Department and by staff at the Center for the Study of Evaluation. The final version of the scale reflects the changes suggested by the reviewers as well as minor modifications agreed upon by the experimenter and the raters prior to the actual rating of students' essays. Appendix B contains the analytic scale.

Training of Raters

Students' essays (N=228) were rated for each of the features on the descriptive/narrative rating scale by three raters. All three readers were high school English teachers and all had had previous experience in holistic rating. Prior to the training and rating sessions all identifying information was removed from the students' essays and each paper was assigned a code number. All the essays were then typed to facilitate rapid reading and to remove the confounding effects of handwriting. No corrections of any kind were made on the typed versions; they were duplicates of the handwritten essays in every respect. Copies of all the essays were xeroxed for the experimenter and for each of the raters. In addition to the 228 sample essays, 140 extra essays were prepared in a similar manner for use in rater training and in calculating inter-rater reliability.

Approximately two full days were required to train the raters. The morning session on the first day was spent reading, discussing and applying the rating scale to the fifteen training essays representing the range in quality of essays in the sample. The readers rated one, two, or three essays individually and then discussed their ratings. During the discussions discrepant ratings were examined, and the elements on the scale and the terms used to describe each element were clarified.

The first inter-rater reliability check was conducted during the after-

noon session after a review of the ratings assigned to five additional training essays. Following a procedure first utilized by Findlayson (1951), a three-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to calculate inter-rater reliability for the ratings assigned to forty essays (two essays written by each of 20 students). The three factors in the analysis were subjects, topics and raters. A mixed model was employed in which subjects and raters were random factors and topics were fixed. Using the formula below, inter-rater reliability was calculated from the variance components provided by the ANOVA.

$$\text{Reliability of Raters} = \frac{\sigma_s^2}{\sigma_s^2 + \frac{\sigma_{sR,e}^2}{n_R}}$$

where σ_s^2 is the variability of the subjects' score and $\sigma_{sR,e}^2$ is the variability due to the interaction of subjects and raters.

Table 3 shows the reliabilities for the forty preliminary essays. The reliability for average ratings was .57 to .84 while the reliability of single ratings ranged from .31 to .64. Additional training on the sequence, setting, and characterization subscales was undertaken on the second day of training since the reliability coefficients for these subscales, especially characterization, were considerably below the .80 level for average ratings that was chosen as the test of acceptability.

TABLE 3
INTER-RATER RELIABILITY FOR 40 PRELIMINARY ESSAYS
(Number of Readers =3)

	Sequence	Setting	Charac- terization	Sentence Structure/ Diction	Grammar/ Spelling
Mean Rating	.71	.76	.57	.84	.82
Single Rating	.45	.51	.31	.64	.61

The second day of training was spent discussing, refining and applying the characterization, setting, and sequence subscales. Essays for which there had been no agreement between the readers were rerated and discussed as were papers for which any one rater had disagreed with the other two by more than one scale point.

After a review of these subscales and the sentence structure/diction and grammar/spelling subscales, inter-rater reliability for 30 papers was calculated. These coefficients as shown in Table 4 ranged from .59 to .71 for single ratings and from .81 to .87 for average ratings.

TABLE 4
INTER-RATER RELIABILITY FOR 30 ADDITIONAL ESSAYS
(Number of Readers =3)

	Sequence	Setting	Charac- terization	Sentence Structure/ Diction	Grammar/ Spelling
Mean Rating	.87	.81	.82	.81	.84
Single Rating	.70	.59	.61	.71	.65

During the afternoon session the rating of the 228 sample essays began. The 228 essays that were rated were placed in a different random order for each rater so that the likelihood of all readers rating the same essays at the same point in time was reduced. However, 38 common essays were included in each readers' stack of essays so that a reliability check could be conducted after the first rating session. These reliability coefficients are presented in Table 5.

TABLE 5
INTER-RATER RELIABILITY FOR 38 COMMON ESSAYS
(Number of Readers =3)

	Sequence	Setting	Charac- terization	Sentence Structure/ Diction	Grammar/ Spelling
Mean Rating	.86	.88	.87	.93	.88
Single Rating	.69	.72	.70	.82	.71

In order to keep rater agreement high, approximately every half hour a common essay was rated individually by each rater and the ratings were discussed. Five to ten minute breaks were taken every half hour or every hour to prevent rater fatigue. The readers rated one paper approximately every two minutes; the majority of the essays were one page long. Rating of the 228 essays by three raters took approximately one and a half days.

One third of the essays were rated during a joint session during which all the raters were present. The remaining papers were rated independently by each of the readers. The same procedures were followed in the individual rating sessions as in the joint session. However each reader rated a common essay and compared his ratings with those of the investigator or the other readers. The final inter-rater reliability for the 228 students' essays is presented in Table 6. Average ratings were .88 and .89 and single ratings ranged from .72 to .74. The ANOVA source tables for each of these reliability coefficients are included in Appendix C (Tables A-F).

TABLE 6
FINAL INTER-RATER RELIABILITY FOR 228 COMPOSITIONS
(Number of Readers =3)

	Sequence	Setting	Character- ization	Sentence Structure/ Diction	Grammar/ Spelling
Mean Rating	.89	.88	.89	.88	.89
Single Rating	.72	.72	.72	.72	.74

The means and standard deviations of students' scores on each subscale are presented in Table 7. Total score is equal to the sum of the subscale scores divided by the product of the number of raters and number of scales.

TABLE 7
MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS OF TOTAL ESSAY SCORES
(N=114)

Dependent Measure	Possible Range	$\bar{x}$	SD
Subscale 1	1-4	2.589	.692
Subscale 2	1-4	2.370	.682
Subscale 3	1-4	2.459	.612
Subscale 4	1-4	2.608	.687
Subscale 5	1-4	2.616	.780

On the average, student performance is not high or low on any one subscale. Performance data for students by tracking level are presented in Table 8.

TABLE 8
MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS OF DEPENDENT MEASURE BY TRACKING LEVEL

Dependent Measure	TRACKING LEVEL					
	3		2		1	
	$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD
Subscale 1	3.04	.304	2.47	.291	1.95	.233
Subscale 2	2.85	.297	2.19	.247	1.92	.156
Subscale 3	2.85	.248	2.33	.138	2.00	.085
Subscale 4	3.07	.384	2.505	.194	1.78	.078
Subscale 5	3.12	.462	2.498	.204	1.75	.156

Level 1 - Below Average

Level 2 - Average

Level 3 - Above Average

These figures indicate that the mean performance of students in classes designated as above average is consistently higher than the mean performance of students in average and below average classes. The mean performance of average level students across subscales is, in turn, consistently higher than the mean performance of students in below average classes.

To examine the relationship among subscales, the zero-order correlation matrix for the subscales was generated (See Table 9).

TABLE 9
ANALYTIC SCALE - CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS

	SS1	SS2	SS3	SS4	SS5
SS1	1.00 (0) S=0.001	0.84 (114) S=0.001	0.80 (114) S=0.001	0.81 (114) S=0.001	0.72 (114) S=0.001
SS2	0.84 (114) S=0.001	1.00 (0) S=0.001	0.68 (114) S=0.001	0.72 (114) S=0.001	0.66 (114) S=0.001
SS3	0.80 (114)	0.68 (114)	1.00 (0)	0.75 (114)	0.68 (114)
SS4	0.81 (114) S=0.001	0.72 (114) S=0.001	0.75 (114) S=0.001	1.00 (0) S=0.001	0.93 (114) S=0.001
SS5	0.72 (114) S=0.001	0.66 (114) S=0.001	0.68 (114) S=0.001	0.93 (114) S=0.001	1.00 (0) S=0.001

SS1 = Sequence/Coherence

SS2 = Setting

SS3 = Characterization

SS4 = Sentence structure/diction

SS5 = Grammar/spelling

The correlations between specific subscales range from $r=.66$ ($p .001$) to $r=.93$ ($p .001$).

In addition, a factor analysis was performed on the rating scale using the classical method of principal factoring with iterations which assumes that the observed correlations between variable pairs are the result of an underlying structure. This method "infers" the factors from correlations in the data, replacing the main diagonal elements of the correlation matrix with communality estimates before factoring. The results of the factor analysis indicated that all subscales were significantly loaded on one factor.

Analysis between the independent variables and students' scores on separate subscales were not performed since the subscales were found to be highly intercorrelated measures on the underlying construct, which is presumed to be writing ability. In assuming the effects of instructional variables on writing performance, the total essay scores are entered into analysis as class means. Table 10 presents the means, standard deviations and writer-rater reliability of total essay scores.

Table 10
Means, Standard Deviations and Final Interrater
Reliability for Total Essay Scores

	Range	$\bar{X}$	Sd
Total Sample (n=14)	5-20	12.642	3.104
Tracking Level:			
3 (n=)		14.931	1.589
2 (n=)		11.986	.689
1 (n=)		9.390	.707
Final Interrator Reliability			
(Number of Readers = 3)			
Mean Rating		.94	
Single Rating		.87	

DATA ANALYSES AND DISCUSSION

Overview

As described above, this study of composition skills focussed upon the relationships between student and teacher reports on classroom use of instructional variables and the quality of student writing samples. In particular the research questions addressed are:

- I. How are selected instructional variables employed in the composition classroom: a) as reported by students? b) as reported by teachers?
 - . Are intended instructional outcomes communicated to students?
 - . How do teachers parcel out instructional time among writing activities, modes of discourse and specific skills?
 - . What kind and how much opportunity to practice is provided?
 - . What is the time interval for knowledge of results and what form does this feedback take?
- II. What is the relationship between students' writing performance and use of each of the four instructional variables above? a) as reported by students? b) as reported by teachers?

The student samples selected for this study are drawn from three different competency or tracking levels: below average, average, and above average. This grouping of classes into competency levels is maintained throughout data analysis reporting and discussion because it appears to be directly related

to writing performance (see Table 10).

Unfortunately, due to attrition of participant classes, the below average class numbers dropped below a satisfactory level for meaningful data analysis (teacher - N=2; student - N=31). While data for below average classes will appear in the tables, discussions will refer only to average and above average tracked classes, except where otherwise noted. Although cell numbers also differ between these two classifications, numbers are sufficiently high for the exploratory purposes of this study (average track teacher: N=11, student: N=166; above average track teacher: N=6, student: N=105).

Self-report data on instructional variables were gathered by student and teacher questionnaires.* Performance data consists of ratings on two narrative/descriptive writing samples obtained from students and analytically scored on a five-component scale.**

The first pair of research questions above is addressed by a discussion of descriptive data acquired from student and teacher questionnaires. The second pair of research questions is addressed through the use of regression analyses to examine the relationships among reports on the several instructional variables and student writing performance. Copies of student and teacher questionnaires previously described in the Methods section appear in Appendix A.

Analysis of Descriptive Data

Four instructional variables were selected to provide a description of instruction in composition classes. These variables are: 1) communication of intended instructional outcomes; 2) instructional time use; 3) opportunity for practice; and 4) use of knowledge of results.

*Throughout this section questionnaires will be referred to as follows: Teacher Questionnaire = TQ; Student Questionnaire = SQ. Specific questionnaire items will be indicated by number (e.g., SQ7, TQ11).

**The analytic scale appears in Appendix B; rating procedures are described in detail in the Method section.

Communication of instructional outcomes. Teacher communication to students of intended instructional outcomes was determined by indexing the degree of match between each groups' selection of intended outcomes. Both groups' questionnaires provided a checklist of possible composition competency, or instruction, goals. Students were asked to check those skills "your Contemporary Composition teacher wants your class to have at the end of the semester". (SQ7). Teachers were to check those skills "you expect (your) students to have at the end of the semester." Students' check list described possible skills in more familiar terms.

As described in the Method section, student and teacher reports were indexed by agreement, taking the square root of the mean squared difference between the post-instructional skills selected by students and teachers. Table 26 reports the discrepancy indices for each of the instructional variables. These indices were used later in regression analyses.

An important caveat limits the strength of reports of intended outcomes and suggests directions for future research. In this questionnaire item, reports of instructional goals may reflect students' ability to intuit such goals from teacher emphases in assignments and/or class time use. This is not the same as direct teacher communication of instructional objectives. Additionally, where results vary by competency groupings, differences in degree of match between students and teachers may reflect differences in students' abilities to "pick up on" teachers' intentions. Future research on this question would perhaps be better served by naturalistic observation techniques rather than retrospective self-report.

Instructional time use. Descriptive data on instructional time use differentiated class time spent on each of the four modes of writing (TQ5), on grammar and mechanics (TQ12; SQ1) and on specific writing skills (TQ11;

SQ1). Tables 11 and 12 display these results. Of those teachers responding (N=17) eight reported evenly distributing class time among the four modes of discourse. Four of the five respondents from above average classrooms fell into this first category. The remaining teacher responses were divided as follows: three teachers spend 50% of class time on descriptive writing; four teachers spend 50% time on narration and one splits class time between description and narration reporting no time spent on exposition or argumentation.

Opportunity to practice. Information on students' opportunity to practice writing skills was gathered by self-report of frequency in-class and homework assignments (SQ 2, 3, 4, 5ab, 6ab; TQ 6, 7, 8, 9, 10). These frequencies appear in Table 13. Additionally, students and teachers reported types of practice and kinds of non-writing class activities (TQ 14, 15 and SQ 2, 3, 12).

Interestingly teachers of both average and above average tracking levels are remarkably congruent in their reported use of in-class writing assignments. (See Tables G and H). The consensus of self-reports is in the category of "one-to-five written assignments" in each mode, narrative, descriptive, argumentative, expository. For both groups (average and above average level teachers) consensus is greatest for narrative mode assignments (average teachers - 80% consensus; above average teachers - 83% consensus. In the descriptive mode, while the higher level teachers remain high in consensus about one-to-five assignments, average teachers show a spread toward the higher numbers of assignments: 55% reporting one-to-five assignments, 28% reporting six-to-ten assignments, 8% reporting more than ten assignments in the descriptive mode.

This distinction between teacher groups' consensus on number of in-class writing opportunities becomes sharper with each of the remaining two modes,

TABLE 11

Teachers' Report of Number of Writing
Assignments by Class Tracking Level (1,2,3)*

Type of Assignment	Number of Assignments														
	0			1-5			Level			6-10			Over 10		
	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
One-paragraph compositions	0%	18%	0%	50%	27%	83%				0%	37%	0%	50%	18%	17%
Multi-paragraph compositions	0	0	17	50	27	17				0	0	33	50	73	33
Poems	50	50	33	50	50	67				0	0	0	0	0	0
Research Papers	50	64	17	50	36	83				0	0	0	0	0	0
Practical Informative Essays	0	9	0	50	64	100				50	18	0	0	9	0
Narrative Essays	0	10	0	100	80	83				0	10	17	0	0	0
Descriptive Essays	0	9	0	100	55	83				0	27	17	0	9	0
Expository Essays	0	18	0	100	46	67				0	9	33	0	21	0
Argumentative Essays	50	30	0	50	50	100				0	20	0	0	0	0
Grammar Exercises	0	9	33	0	18	17				100	18	33	0	55	17
Vocabulary Exercises	0	9	33	50	46	17				50	9	33	0	36	17

*Level 1 = Below Average
Level 2 = Average
Level 3 = Above Average

TABLE 12
Teachers' and Students' Report of Time on Features of
Descriptive/Narrative Writing by Tracking Level (1,2,3)*

Group	Number of Class Periods									N					
	0			1-5			6-10				Over 10				
							Level								
Students' Report	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
Features of Descriptive/Narr Writing															
Descriptive Features	3%	2%	4%	52%	43%	45%	33%	43%	43%	12%	12%	8%	33	175	105
Narrative Order	9	6	1	29	53	27	47	37	55	15	4	17	34	177	105
Mechanics	0	5	*4	39	42	38	39	40	43	22	13	15	31	176	101
Teachers' Report															
Features of Descriptive/Narr Writing															
Descriptive Features	0	0	0	0	46	33.3	100	36	33.3	0	18	33.3	2	11	6
Narrative Order	0	0	0	0	36	50	100	55	33	0	9	17	2	11	6
Mechanics	0	0	0	0	18	0	100	36	46	0	50	17	2	11	6

*Level 1 = Below Average
Level 2 = Average
Level 3 = Above Average

36

41

40

TABLE 13
Students' and Teachers' Reports of Writing
Practice by Tracking Level (1,2,3)

	In-Class			Homework			
	Levels	1	2	3	1	2	3
Group							
Students							
Frequency		n=34	n=185	n=104	n=32	n=179	n=100
Daily		17%	6%	23%	3%	2%	16%
Twice a week		35	18	21	38	11	14
Once a week		15	34	22	19	33	23
Once every 2 weeks		9	21	20	13	22	29
Once a month		15	4	8	9	8	1
1 or 2 times a semester		6	12	5	13	12	7
Never		3	5	1	5	12	10
Average Length		n=33	n=173	n=104	n=30	n=160	n=86
Less than one page		15%	10%	22%	3%	9%	13%
One page		52	76	60	53	51	37
Two or more pages		33	14	18	43	40	50
Teachers							
Frequency		n=2	n=11	n=6	n=2	n=11	n=6
Daily		50%	27%	17%	0%	0%	0%
Twice a week		0	0	0	0	0	0
Once a week		0	0	17	0	9	17
Once every two weeks		0	0	17	0	36	17
Once a month		0	46	17	100	36	17
1 or 2 times a semester		50	18	32	0	9	49
Never		0	9	0	0	9	0
Average Length		n=2	n=10	n=5	n=2	n=11	n=6
Less than one page		50%	40%	20%	0%	18%	17%
One page		0	30	40	0	18	17
Two or more pages		50	30	40	100	64	68

argumentation and exposition. In the argumentation mode, teachers of higher level students are in 100% agreement in their use of one-to-five writing assignments in class. Average level teachers are scattered in their reported in-class practice. Although 50% report one-to-five assignments, 30% report no assignments in argumentation, 20% report six-to-ten in-class assignments. Thus it appears that for the argumentative mode, students in average competency classes have a range of in-class practice; while some students receive no in-class practice, others receive as much as six-to-ten in-class assignments.

This scattering of teacher opinion on in-class opportunity to practice is most pronounced for expository writing. The greatest consensus for average class teachers (46% of the respondents) is still in the category of one-to-five in-class assignments. However, 18% report no in-class assignments on exposition; 9% report six-to-ten such practice opportunities; and surprisingly 27% of average class level teachers offer more than ten in-class writing assignments on exposition. Teachers of above average track students are in least agreement about in-class assignments for the expository mode of writing. Still, 67% report one-to-five assignments; but 33% indicate assigning six-to-ten in-class expositions.

Thus, it appears that, for this sample, most teachers offer one-to-five in-class writing opportunities for each mode, treating each mode, then, with equal emphasis in terms of class time for practice. Average track teachers show more variation in this aspect of opportunity to practice in the expository and argumentative modes, tending in their variation toward the more frequent in-class writing opportunities. Teachers of above average competence students are less variable in their in-class offerings by mode; however, in their variation they also lean toward more frequent opportunities for

in-class practice. Unlike average-track teachers, this variation of opinion is in the expository mode only.

The similarities of in-class practice on the four modes of writing, i.e., one-to-five writing assignments, suggest little difference in teachers' emphases across writing modes. However, when asked to report the number of in-class assignments on grammar and mechanics, teachers show different patterns of consensus distinguished by class competency level. As might be expected, teachers of average competency classes report more in-class grammar/mechanics work. Fifty-five percent of these teachers indicate they give their classes ten or more in-class assignments on the subject, with 18% reporting six-to-ten assignments. This means 73% of average level teachers give six or more in-class assignments specifically aimed at grammar and mechanics practice. In contrast, teachers of above average classes show little consensus on use of in-class grammar assignments; no response category exceeded 33%. However, unlike the tendency toward more practice opportunities in average classes, only 50% of teachers of above average classes indicate six or more grammar assignments. Further, only 17% report ten or more such assignments; 33% never give such assignments.

The remaining data on practice concern length and frequency of writing assignments (see Table 13). As might be expected, more teachers of the higher track students assign longer class essays than do teachers of average track students: 40% of the average teachers indicate class assignments of less than one page of writing compared to only 20% of the higher track teachers. Interestingly, length of homework essays is two or more pages for 64% of average track and for 68% of above average track.

The frequency of in-class writing practice for above average track classes, as reported by teachers, shows little consensus; responses divides

among: once a week, 17%; once every two weeks, 17%; once a month, 17%. The low frequency categories--on-two times a semester and never--receive 32% and 17% respectively, of the teacher responses. This same distribution of responses for teachers of above average classes is found for homework writing frequency.

The frequency of in-class writing practice, average and above average classes, as reported by teachers, shows little consensus. For the higher track, responses divide among once a week, 17%; once every two weeks, 17%; once a month, 17%. The low frequency categories--one-two times a semester and never--receive 32% and 17% respectively, of the teacher responses. This same distribution of responses for teachers of above average classes is found for homework writing frequency.

For teachers of average students, 9% report daily in-class writing. However, the remainder of those respondents, 91%, assign class writing once a month or less (once a month, 46%; one-two times a semester, 18%; never, 27%). Homework writing is more frequently assigned; 72% report two-to-four home assignments monthly; 9%, daily; 9%, weekly; and 9%, once or twice a semester.

Thus, it would appear that teachers of average students have their students engage in writing activities more often, both at home and in-class, than do above average track teachers. However, it would appear such essays are of shorter length, less than a page or two, than those required of the higher competency students. Further, as noted above, some writings of these average students in class are more likely to be oriented to grammar and mechanics than are those class writings of above average track students.

Knowledge of results. Information on teachers' use of knowledge of results was obtained from students' and teachers' self-reports of feedback and turnaround time for papers (SQ, 8,9,10,11; TQ 16,17,18).

There is an interesting distinction between the two teacher groups in their methods for providing students with feedback (See Table 14). While both groups find high consensus for use of letter grades (90% average track teachers; 100% above average track teachers) only 64% of the average ability track teachers report writing comments on students' papers for feedback compared to use of written comments by above average class teachers. Also, while 83% of these above average track teachers make use of individual conferences for feedback purposes, only 45% of the average competency level teachers reported this. They would appear to prefer whole class discussion, 36%, more than their counterparts, 18%.

The categories for feedback strategies suggest a continuum of directiveness as follows: positive or negative general comments; more specific indications of strengths and weaknesses; and specific suggestions or rules which are directly applicable. Students' descriptions of written feedback qualities are fairly congruent between the two groups with one exception. Only 33% of students in average classes report receiving specific suggestions or rules. In contrast, 62% of students in above average classes receive this most highly directive feedback. For 42% of the average class students, feedback consists of indications of strengths and weaknesses.

In their descriptions of the utility and value of feedback, both student groups show the same pattern of consensus; more than 50% describe feedback as "helpful," and approximately 40% describe teacher comments as "very helpful." (See Table 5).

Descriptive data on feedback interval (Table 16) reflects teachers' reports of the turnaround time for correcting students' papers. Close to 75% of the average track teachers return papers in either two to three days (36%) or a week (36%). As a group, teachers of above average classes, however, tend to take

TABLE 14
Teachers' Reports of Feedback Method

Method	Teachers		
	Level	1	2 3
Individual Conferences*		n=2	n=11 n=6
Letter Grades		0%	45% 83%
Written Comments		100	90 100
Whole Class Discussion		50	36 18

*70% of the students (n=326) indicated they had Conference with their teachers.

Level 1 = 62%

Level 2 = 60%

Level 3 = 90%

TABLE 15
Students' Ratings of Teachers' Comments
by Tracking Level (1,2,3)

Assignment Level	Helpfulness			N
	Very Helpful	Helpful	Not Helpful	
1	25%	75%	0%	20
2	43	53	4	107
3	41	54	5	89

Assignment Level	Instructiveness				N
	Very Instructive	Instructive	Non-Instructive	No Comment	
1	41	18	12	29	34
2	33	42	16	9	184
3	62	33	2	3	106

TABLE 16
Teachers' and Students' Reports of
Immediacy of Feedback

Group	Students' Compositions Returned Within:					
	1 day	2-3 days	week	2-3 weeks	1 month	N
Teachers	5%	37%	32%	21%	5%	19
Level 1	0	50	50	0	0	2
Level 2	9	36	36	9	9	11
Level 3	0	33	17	50	0	6
Students	3%	28%	29%	31%	9%	300
Level 1	13	57	17	13	0	30
Level 2	3	30	34	25	9	166
Level 3	1	18	23	47	12	104

44

longer. Half of those queried indicate a lapse of two to three weeks before papers are returned to students. The remaining 50% take two to three days (33%) or a week (17%).

While it might appear that teachers of above average composition classes are less prompt in supplying feedback to their students than teachers of average classes, as discussed earlier, teachers of average classes make shorter assignments and these teachers include grammar/mechanics practice in their in-class writing assignments. Such assignments are often more readily corrected. Also, as reported in this section on feedback, above average track teachers provide more directive feedback and report greater use of written comments than do average teachers. From these descriptions it would seem that average teachers may require less time to go over their students' work and are thus able to return papers faster. Also, recall the higher track teachers make more use of individual conferences than average track teachers. Such conferences likely detract from class time, whereas average teachers use more whole class time for feedback purposes. Also, because they provide more in-class writing practice, perhaps they are able to correct papers while their students write.

Regression Analysis and Discussion

Multiple regression was used to investigate the initial relationships among reported use of the instructional variables and student essay scores. Since instructional practice was a class level phenomenon, the class was used as the unit of analysis. The results of three separate regressions are reported here. First, total essay rating was regressed on students' self-report information for the independent variables (communication of intended instructional outcomes, instructional time use, practice, knowledge of results). Second, essay scores and teachers reports of instructional practice

were entered in a separate regression. Finally, total writing score was regressed on the discrepancy between teachers' and students' self-report data.

Student self-report variables were entered into the regression equation based upon data from students' self-report. The first three variables relate to the amount of instructional time spent on elements of narrative/descriptive writing. These variables are instructional time on description, narrative order and mechanics. The next three variables relate to feedback; helpfulness of teacher feedback; directiveness or instructive quality of written comments; and, the turnaround time for feedback. The final variable entered in the equation is track level.

Means and standard deviations of each variable above are presented in Table 17. The mean of each variable is in the midrange of possible values.

Table 18 presents the unstandardized regression coefficients for each of the independent variables in the regression equation. As a set, the variables account for 66% of the variation ($F=5.36$, of 8, 10) in essay ratings. However, the only significant relationship found as a result of regressing the dependent measure on these independent variables is between tracking level and total writing score (See Table 18). The correlations between variables in the regression indicate that track level is highly related to writing performance ($r=.87$) and to other variables in the regression (See Table 19). Specifically, tracking level is significantly related to time on narrative order ($r=.43$) and with instructiveness of teachers' written comments ($r=.58$). These latter variables, as might be expected, are also highly correlated with total writing score ($r=.43$ for time on the narrative order and $r=.52$ for directiveness of feedback). Thus, because tracking level and writing performance are so highly correlated, it is impossible to separate the effects

TABLE 17
Means and Standard Deviations
of the Variables in the Regression Based
on Student Report

Variable	$\bar{X}$	SD
		N=19
Time on Description	2.50	.296
Time on Narrative Order	2.61	.367
Time on Mechanics	2.64	.293
Amount of Writing Practice	.958	.210
Helpfulness of Feedback	2.29	.192
Immediacy of Feedback	2.98	.712
Instructiveness of Feedback	3.07	.449
Track Level	2.21	.630
Total Score	12.64	2.04

TABLE 18
Regression Coefficients for
Total Writing Score Regression on Student Report

Independent Variable	Unstandardized b	Standard Error b	Standardized B	F
Time on Description	-0.797	1.241	-.115	.412
Time on Narrative Order	.492	1.039	.088	.225
Time on Mechanics	-0.997	1.710	-.143	.340
Amount of Practice	.164	1.817	.017	.008
Helpfulness of Feedback	-1.324	2.089	-.124	.402
Immediacy of Feedback	.693	.513	.244	1.829
Instructiveness of Feedback	.235	1.324	.052	.032
Track Level	2.963	.589	.914	25.263*

*p < .01

$R^2 = .81$

Adj. $R^2 = .66$

of instruction on performance.

The correlations among the independent variables in the regression (see Table 19) are of interest since they provide information concerning the pattern of instruction in the classrooms as perceived by students. According to students' self-report data, time spent on descriptive features of writing is negatively correlated with instructional time on mechanics ($r = -.45$). This finding, considered with the very low correlation between time on description and time on narrative order ($r = .12$) suggests that students perceive instructional time on description as separate from instruction in narrative order or lessons on mechanics. Another significant correlation based on students' reports is between instruction on mechanics and immediate feedback ($r = .43$). The correlations between the helpfulness of feedback and mechanics, although not significant, is moderately high ($r = .34$) suggesting that feedback on mechanics may be qualitatively different.

Results of Regressing Writing Performance on Teachers' Reports

The independent variables in the regression based on teachers' reports are identical to those in the student equation with the exception of the variables related to perceived instructiveness and helpfulness of feedback. The means and standard deviations of each of these variables are presented in Table 20. The mean values on each variable, as is the case with students, are in the midrange. As might be expected, they are consistently slightly higher than are the means based on students' reports. As a set, the variables account for 73% ($F = 5.36$) of the variation in essay ratings. Again, the only significant relationship is between tracking level and essay score. (see Table 21).

An examination of the correlation matrix of the variables in the equation shows that, with the exception of tracking level, none of the variables are

TABLE 19

Correlation Matrix for Variables in the Regression
Based on Student Report

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	---	0.12	-0.45*	-0.30	0.14	0.04	0.25	0.08	0.03
2			0.10	0.18	0.24	-0.13	0.55	0.43	0.43*
3				0.32	0.34	0.43	-0.31	-0.10	-0.12
4					0.14	0.10	0.31	0.03	0.07
5						0.23	0.36	0.23	0.12
6							-0.36	-0.36	-0.20
7								0.58*	0.52*
8									0.87*
9									

*p < .05

Variable Key:

- 1=time on description
- 2=time on narrative order
- 3=time on mechanics
- 4=amount of practice
- 5=helpfulness of feedback
- 6=immediacy of feedback
- 7=directiveness of feedback
- 8=track level
- 9=dependent measure (essay rating)

TABLE 20
Means and Standard Deviations of
the Variables in the Regression
Based in Teacher Report

Variable	$\bar{X}$	N=19	SD
Time on Description	2.72		.632
Time on Narrative Order	2.83		.650
Time on Mechanics	2.91		.843
Amount of Practice	1.09		.484
Immediacy of Feedback	3.16		1.010
Track Level	2.21		.631
Total Score	12.64		2.044

TABLE 21
Regression Coefficients for
Total Writing Score Regressed on Teacher Report

Independent Variable	Unstandardized b	Standard Error b	Standardized B	F
Time on Description	.444	.606	.137	.537
Time on Narrative Order	-.251	.803	.080	.097
Time on Mechanics	.371	.474	.153	.613
Amount of Practice	-.289	.539	.068	.288
Immediacy of Feedback	.393	.274	.195	2.067
Track Level	3.000	.440	.927	46.529*

*p < .01

$R^2 = .82$

Adj. $R^2 = .73$

significantly correlated with the dependent measure (see Table 22). Teachers' reports of time on description and time on narrative order are highly correlated ($r=.63$) as are reports and time on narrative order and time on mechanics ($r=.69$). Note that these relationships are different from those reported by students, suggesting that students' and teachers' perceptions of instructional practice differ with regard to several dimensions examined in the study.

Results of Regressing Writing Performance on the Discrepancy

The discrepancies between students' and teachers' reports on instructional variables were calculated. In addition to the three instructional variables used thus far in regression analyses, a discrepancy index was also calculated for communication of intended instruction outcomes (See Table 26).

Table 23 presents the means and standard deviations of each variable entered in the regression. In examining these figures it should be noted that the standard deviations of variables for time on description, and on narrative order are quite high relative to the means of these variables.

The regression of writing performance on the discrepancy between teachers' and students' perceptions is reported in Table 24. The variables account for 70% of the variation ($F=6.96$, $df=7, 11$). As shown in Table 24, the results of this regression are identical to the results from the preceeding regressions. The only significant relationship found is between tracking level and total writing score.

As in the previous regressions, an examination of the correlation matrix of the variables in the regression provides additional information about the relationship between the independent variables, tracking level and total writing (see Table 25). Figures indicate that student-teacher agreement on intended instructional outcomes is highly negatively correlated with class ability levels ($r=-.54$). That is, the higher ability level classes are

TABLE 22

Correlation Matrix for the Variables in the
Regression Based on Teacher Report

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	---	0.63*	0.17	-0.16	-0.30	0.05	0.11
2			0.69*	-0.10	-0.21	-0.22	-0.13
3				0.01	-0.04	-0.26	-0.13
4					-0.12	-0.07	-0.17
5						-0.23	-0.04
6							0.87*
7							----

*p < .05

Variable Key:

- 1=time on descriptive writing
- 2=time on narrative order
- 3=time on mechanics
- 4=amount of practice
- 5=immediacy of feedback
- 6=tracking level
- 7=dependent measure (essay rating)

TABLE 23
 Values of the Variables in the
 Regression Coefficient Based on
 the Discrepancy Between Student and Teacher
 Reports

Variable	$\bar{X}$	SD
	N=19	
Task Description	.439	.078
Time on Description	.520	.440
Time on Narrative Order	.693	.479
Time on Mechanics	.717	.473
Amount of Practice	1.098	.453
Immediacy of Feedback	.491	.296
Tracking Level	2.210	.631
Total Score	12.643	2.044

TABLE 24
Unstandardized Regression Coefficients for Total Writing
Score Regressed on Discrepancy Between Teacher and
Student Report

Independent Variable	Unstandardized b	Standard Error b	Standardized B	F
Total Description	3.907	4.293	.149	.828
Time on Description	.576	.688	.124	.701
Time on Narrative Order	.333	.630	.078	.279
Time on Mechanics	-.429	.761	-.100	.318
Amount of Practice	.213	.643	.047	.110
Immediacy of Feedback	1.338	1.107	.193	1.461
Initial Ability	3.193	.545	.985	34.382*

*p < .01

$R^2 = .83$

Adj. $R^2 = .70$

TABLE 25
Correlation Matrix for Variables in the Regression Based on
the Discrepancy Between Student and Teacher Report

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	---	-0.24	-0.06	-0.17	-0.19	0.25	-0.54*	-0.36
2			0.03	-0.22	-0.20	-0.27	0.33	0.37
3				0.42	0.05	0.08	-0.05	-0.00
4					0.20	0.40	0.09	0.06
5						-0.10	-0.05	-0.09
6							-0.30	-0.13
7								0.87*
8								

*p < .05

Variable Key:

- 1=discrepancy on instructional goals
- 2=discrepancy on reported time on description
- 3=discrepancy on reported time on narrative order
- 4=discrepancy on reported time on mechanics
- 5=discrepancy on reported amount of practice
- 6=discrepancy on reported immediacy of feedback
- 7=tracking level
- 8=dependent measure (essay rating)

TABLE 26

Values of the Variables in the Regression Based
on the Discrepancy Between Teachers and Students by Class

Class	Task Description	Practice	Description	Narrative Order	Mechanics	Immediacy of Feedback
1	.444	1.162	.557	.583	.990	.560
2	.482	1.102	.240	.163	.413	.820
3	.497	.839	.063	1.070	.983	.380
4	.508	1.517	.103	1.090	1.513	.410
5	.378	1.136	.140	1.110	1.270	.890
6	.363	.994	.240	.007	.127	.160
7	.337	.865	.300	.700	.767	.670
8	.520	1.400	.310	.483	.160	.890
9	.351	1.829	.025	.370	.500	.100
10	.349	1.062	.785	1.753	1.087	.710
11	.382	1.310	.557	.427	.853	.500
12	.472	.976	1.305	.387	.013	.560
13	.460	.591	.759	1.620	.403	.070
14	.543	.026	.908	.317	.030	.420
15	.537	.592	.120	.627	1.183	1.080
16	.427	1.919	.958	.993	.870	.330
17	.288	.850	1.608	.430	1.127	.150
18	.505	1.058	.335	.173	.283	.160
19	.502	1.637	.570	.867	.057	.460

most in concert with their teachers regarding instructional objectives.

Summary of Findings

The proposed purpose of this study was to describe instructional characteristics in required composition classes and their relationships to writing performance in one of the four domains of the curriculum. In particular, narrative writing samples were gathered from students and self-report questionnaire data on the perceived use of instructional variables were obtained from students and their teachers. The four instructional variables of interest were: 1) communication of intended instructional outcomes; 2) instructional time use; 3) practice; and 4) knowledge of results. The relationships of these variables to student writing competence were examined also.

Results of descriptive data analyses on the instructional variables indicate some important differences may exist in instruction between competency levels. The descriptive data portray teachers of average-ability writing classes as more concerned with grammar and mechanics than their counterparts in above-average level classes. Also, average class teachers offer more in-class assignments, of shorter length, with fewer directive comments, but a faster turnaround time. Above-average class teachers spend more time in individual conferences, assign longer papers, and provide more specific rules and suggestions for improvement in their written comments on those papers; practices which may both rely upon and extend students' initial writing skills. In accord with the district's curriculum guidelines, both teacher groups appear to evenly divide class practice among each of the four writing modes, offering one-to-five in-class assignments for narrative, descriptive, expository and argumentative writing.

Results of regression analyses indicated that for the variables examined in this study, tracking, or class assignment, is the single significant vari-

able related to variability in student writing scores. That is, students in above-average composition classes score consistently better than those students in average classes. Thus the analyses reveal no relationship of reported instructional practices, despite the findings that such practices tend to differ for tracking level, and student writing performance. These results may derive from limitations in the design and scope of this initial study, yet they inform further research and motivate more elaborate secondary data analyses. Because of the exploratory nature of this study, sample size, using the classroom as the unit of analysis, was small ($n=19$). When the sample is further subdivided into tracking levels, numbers are even smaller (average classes, $n=11$; above-average classes, $n=6$; below-average classes, $n=2$). Certainly extensions of work in this area should employ larger samples, particularly when data at the classroom level are required. Within the available data base it may be fruitful to pursue further decomposition of the variance in essay ratings. Examination of between-class variation on the dependent variable subscales may indicate higher discriminant validity for class means and the attendant possibility for more fine-grained relations to instructional variables.

Additionally, as was noted in the analysis section, teachers within the same tracking level are not always in consensus in their reports of instructional methods. It may be more fruitful to pursue these discrepancies further by alternative measures of tracking teachers and their classes together in examining the relationship of instruction to student writing performance. Of particular concern in this study is its reliance on retrospective reports. Students' and teachers' self-reports of instructional experience may be inaccurate for a variety of reasons including the following: 1) students' inability to distinguish among teachers' instructional strategies or assigned

tasks; 2) teachers' tendency to report in socially or professionally desirable responses; 3) honest inaccuracies in remembering. Future work might best limit these possibilities by making use of extensive class observation or more frequent intermittent surveys. Observations of ongoing classroom interactions would allow more precise description of instructional practices and corroboration of questionnaire data.

Additional design constraints may have hampered the discovery of significant relationships. City schools' Contemporary Composition classes from which this sample was drawn, are only a semester long, and yet require instruction in each of the four writing modes. As reported in the findings above, teachers dutifully provide instruction in all four modes. Perhaps constraining composition curriculum to two modes of discourse, or expanding course length to accomodate all four modes would strengthen instructional effects. Accordingly, future studies under such condition might uncover relationships that are too weak to surface under current study conditions.

Finally, an important side benefit of this study is the development and field test of an analytic rating scale for narrative essay evaluations. Along with the scale were formed generalizable procedures for constructing and fieldtesting a writing assessment instrument and for training raters in its use.

APPENDIX A

APPENDIX A:
Teacher Questionnaire on Use of Instructional Variables

Directions: Although you may be teaching more than one Contemporary Composition class this semester, please answer the following questions as they apply to the class which is participating in the UCLA study. Most questions can be answered by checking one or more responses.

Name: _____ School: _____

1. Please describe the class which is participating in the study including the range of writing and general ability levels of the students.

2. How would you rate the writing ability of the class as a whole?

- ☐ 1. Excellent
- ☐ 2. Above average
- ☐ 3. Average
- ☐ 4. Below average
- ☐ 5. Poor

3. At the beginning of the semester, how much of an improvement in this group's writing performance did you expect?

- ☐ 1. Great improvement
- ☐ 2. Considerable improvement
- ☐ 3. Some improvement
- ☐ 4. Very little improvement
- ☐ 5. No improvement

4. Has students' writing performance improved to the extent you had anticipated?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Please elaborate: _____

5. Please estimate the percent of instructional time you have spent on the following writing domains over the semester?

	<u>0%</u>	<u>1-10%</u>	<u>11-25%</u>	<u>25-50%</u>	<u>Over 50%</u>
Sensory/Descriptive (e.g., describe an object, person; set a mood)	___	___	___	___	___
Imaginative/Narrative (e.g., personal narrative; short story)	___	___	___	___	___
Practical/Informative (e.g., notes, letters, summaries, directions)	___	___	___	___	___
Expository/Argumentative (e.g., editorial, research paper)	___	___	___	___	___

6. What type of compositions (mode/length) do you usually ask students to write?

7. How frequently do you ask them to write in class?

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ Daily | ☐ Once a month |
| ☐ Twice a week | ☐ Less than once a month |
| ☐ Once a week | ☐ Never |
| ☐ Once every 2 weeks | |

8. In general, how long are the in-class essays students write? Please indicate number of words or pages: _____

9. How frequently do you give this class writing assignments as homework?

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ Daily | ☐ Once a month |
| ☐ Twice a week | ☐ Less than once a month |
| ☐ Once a week | ☐ Never |
| ☐ Once every 2 weeks | |

10. In general, how long are the out-of-class essays students write? Please indicate number of words or pages: _____

11. Approximately how many class periods has this class spent covering, discussing or learning to:

	<u>0</u>	<u>1-5</u>	<u>6-10</u>	<u>11-15</u>	<u>Over 16</u>
Include details that give a clear picture of a person, place or thing; how it looks, smells etc.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Include dialogue between characters in a paper	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Describe a setting in detail	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Describe characters physically	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Describe characters psychologically	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Sequence events in time order	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Use flashback, foreshadowing	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Use an appropriate and consistent point of view	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

12. Approximately how many class periods has the class spent on:

	<u>0</u>	<u>1-5</u>	<u>6-10</u>	<u>11-15</u>	<u>Over 16</u>
sentence structure: correctness	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
sentence structure: variety and fluency	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
transitions and transitional phrases	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
order and relationship among sentences	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
topic, thesis or opening sentences	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
closing or concluding sentences	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
usage	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
spelling	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
punctuation	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

13. Approximately how many times during the semester have students written for the entire class period on an assigned topic? _____

14. In what kinds of activities do students in the class participate? (Check all that apply).

☐ Before writing, discuss an assignment with the whole class

☐ Listen to a lecture on the qualities of good writing

☐ Write individually in class

☐ Read composition texts

☐ Read literature

☐ Analyze pieces of writing with the whole class

☐ Write a piece which is similar in form and style to one they have read

☐ Read their writing aloud to the class

☐ Listen to you read to the class

☐ Revise and rewrite essays based on your comments

☐ Other activities (please specify) _____

15. During the semester, how many of the following types of assignments has this class been given?

	<u>0</u>	<u>1-5</u>	<u>6-10</u>	<u>More than 10</u>
Single paragraph compositions	___	___	___	___
Multi-paragraph compositions	___	___	___	___
Poetry	___	___	___	___
Outlines	___	___	___	___
Research papers	___	___	___	___
Practical/informative compositions	___	___	___	___
Narratives	___	___	___	___
Expository compositions	___	___	___	___
Argumentative compositions	___	___	___	___
Descriptive compositions	___	___	___	___
Grammar exercises	___	___	___	___
Vocabulary exercises	___	___	___	___

16. When you read a student's paper, to what features do you attend? (e.g., spelling, punctuation, organization)?

17. What methods do you use to provide students with feedback concerning their performance on writing assignments? (e.g., conferences, written or oral comments, letter grades)

18. Within what period of time are papers usually read and returned to students?

☐ 1 day ☐ 1 week ☐ 1 month
☐ 2 or 3 days ☐ 2 or 3 weeks

19. Which of the following statements match most closely the skills you expect students to have at the end of the semester? (Check all that apply)

☐ Employ appropriate vocabulary (variety, precision, suitability to topic, audience)
☐ Use correct spelling
☐ Maintain consistency in tone, person, point of view
☐ Use correct grammar and sentence structure
☐ Use a variety of sentence lengths and beginnings in their writing
☐ Write a complete sentence that clearly expresses a thought
☐ Write a clear unified paragraph
☐ Write a coherent multi-paragraph paper
☐ Express ideas with originality in style, diction and expression
☐ Listen carefully and observe the world around them
☐ Support topics with details, examples, evidence
☐ Follow accepted standards of English usage
☐ Speak effectively in front of a group
☐ Maintain coherence and use transitions effectively
☐ Other skills (please specify) _____

Student Questionnaire on Use of Instructional Variables

DIRECTIONS: FOR EACH QUESTION, CHECK (✓) THOSE ANSWERS WHICH DESCRIBE WHAT HAPPENS IN YOUR CONTEMPORARY COMPOSITION CLASS. THE INFORMATION YOU AND OTHER STUDENTS PROVIDE IS IMPORTANT SO PLEASE ANSWER THE QUESTIONS CAREFULLY.

Name: _____ Date: _____

School: _____ Teacher: _____

1. About how much time has your Contemporary Composition class spent covering, discussing or learning about each of the following? Put a check under None if your class has spent no time; a check under Some if your class has spent 6-10 class periods; a check under Little if it has spent less time than this; a check under A Lot if it has spent more time than this.

	<u>None</u>	<u>Little</u>	<u>Some</u> <u>6-10</u> <u>periods</u>	<u>A Lot</u>
A. Include details that give a clear picture of a person, place or thing; how it looks, tastes, smells, etc.	_____	_____	_____	_____
B. Include dialogue between characters in a paper	_____	_____	_____	_____
C. Describe what a character looks like	_____	_____	_____	_____
D. Describe a character's personality, feelings	_____	_____	_____	_____
E. Describe a setting (time and place) in detail	_____	_____	_____	_____
F. Describe the order in which a series of events happened	_____	_____	_____	_____
G. Use correct spelling and punctuation	_____	_____	_____	_____
H. Use transitions or linking expressions such as "therefore", "next", "on the one hand", etc.	_____	_____	_____	_____
I. Use a variety of sentence lengths and beginnings	_____	_____	_____	_____
J. Write basic and more complex sentences correctly	_____	_____	_____	_____
K. Write a topic, thesis or opening sentence	_____	_____	_____	_____
L. Write a concluding or closing sentence	_____	_____	_____	_____

2. During the semester how many assignments asked the class to write a(n):

	<u>None</u>	<u>1-5</u>	<u>6-10</u>	<u>More than 10</u>
A. Essay or composition with 1 paragraph	_____	_____	_____	_____
B. Essay or composition with more than 1 paragraph	_____	_____	_____	_____
C. Poem	_____	_____	_____	_____
D. Short story, myth or fable	_____	_____	_____	_____
E. Letter	_____	_____	_____	_____
F. Outline	_____	_____	_____	_____
G. Research paper	_____	_____	_____	_____
H. Instructions or directions	_____	_____	_____	_____
I. Essay about a personal experience	_____	_____	_____	_____
J. Essay which describes something	_____	_____	_____	_____
K. Essay which explains or analyzes something	_____	_____	_____	_____
L. Essay which argues for or against something	_____	_____	_____	_____

3. During the semester how many assignments asked the class to:

	<u>None</u>	<u>1-5</u>	<u>6-10</u>	<u>More than 10</u>
A. Complete vocabulary exercises	_____	_____	_____	_____
B. Practice punctuation	_____	_____	_____	_____
C. Complete grammar exercises	_____	_____	_____	_____

4. Do you ever do any writing, other than school assignments, outside of school?

____ Yes

____ No

If Yes, what do you write? _____

(TURN OVER)

5a. How often does your class write essays or compositions during class?

- ☐ Every day
- ☐ Twice a week
- ☐ Once a week
- ☐ Once every 2 weeks
- ☐ Once a month
- ☐ 1 or 2 times during the semester
- ☐ Never

6a. How often does your teacher give writing assignments for homework?

- ☐ Every day
- ☐ Twice a week
- ☐ Once a week
- ☐ Once every 2 weeks
- ☐ Once a month
- ☐ 1 or 2 times during the semester
- ☐ Never

5b. In general, how long are the in-class essays you write?

- ☐ 1 paragraph
- ☐ 1 page
- ☐ 2 or more pages

6b. In general, how long are the essays you write for homework?

- ☐ 1 paragraph
- ☐ 1 page
- ☐ 2 or more pages

6. Do you ever write for the entire class period on a single assigned topic?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

7. Which of the following skills do you feel your Contemporary Composition teacher wants your class to have at the end of the semester?

- ☐ Use words that suit what we're trying to say and the audience for which we're writing
- ☐ Use correct spelling
- ☐ Use a consistent point of view, person and tone in an essay
- ☐ Write simple and more complex sentences correctly; avoid fragments and run-ons
- ☐ Vary the length of sentences in a composition
- ☐ Write a complete sentence that clearly expresses a thought
- ☐ Write a paper containing several paragraphs which fit together so the paper flows smoothly
- ☐ Express our ideas in an original and exciting way
- ☐ Listen carefully and observe things around us
- ☐ Support what we say with details, examples, evidence
- ☐ Use language which is accepted as correct by most people; avoid slang
- ☐ Be able to speak in front of a group
- ☐ Write a well organized paragraph
- ☐ Use transitions or linking expressions such as "however", "In conclusion", etc.
- ☐ Reread, revise and rewrite what we have written
- ☐ OTHER SKILLS (Write them here) _____

8. Do you have conferences with your teacher to discuss a composition you are writing or have written?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If Yes, how helpful are the conferences in helping you re-write or understand how to improve a composition?

- ☐ Very helpful
- ☐ Helpful
- ☐ No help

how helpful are they in helping you write better in the future?

- ☐ Very helpful
- ☐ Helpful
- ☐ No help

9. When you turn in compositions, are they usually read by the teacher and returned to you?
☐ Yes ☐ No

If Yes, how long does the teacher usually take to return a composition?

- ☐ 1 day ☐ 1 week ☐ 1 month or longer
☐ 2 or 3 days ☐ 2 or 3 weeks

10. What kinds of comments does your teacher usually write on your papers?

- ☐ One or two general comments such as "Good Neat Work", "Much Improved", "You can do better than this"
☐ Comments which point out weaknesses or strengths in the paper such as "Poorly organized", "You don't support what you say with details", "Good Use of description"
☐ Comments which give me a rule to follow or which tell me what to do to correct my error such as "State your main idea at the beginning and support it in the body of the paper".
☐ My teacher doesn't write comments on my compositions

11. How helpful are the comments your teacher writes in helping you write better?

- ☐ Very helpful
☐ Helpful
☐ No help

12. Which of the following activities are part of your Contemporary Composition class?
CHECK ALL THAT APPLY.

- ☐ Before writing, discuss a writing assignment with the whole class
☐ Listen to the teacher talk about the qualities of good writing
☐ Write individually in class
☐ Read books about the qualities of good writing
☐ Read novels, plays, short stories, etc.
☐ Discuss (analyze) pieces of writing with the whole class
☐ Write a piece which is similar in style and form to one we've read
☐ Read my writing aloud to the class
☐ Listen to the teacher read to the class
☐ Revise and rewrite essays based on the teacher's comments
☐ OTHER ACTIVITIES (Write them here) _____

13. How well do you feel you write compared to other students in your school?

- ☐ Much better than most
☐ A little better than most
☐ As well as most
☐ Worse than most

14. How well do you feel you write compared to students in your composition class?

- ☐ Much better than most
☐ A little better than most
☐ As well as most
☐ Worse than most

14. At the beginning of the semester, how much of an improvement in your writing ability did you expect as a result of taking Contemporary Composition?

- ☐ A lot ☐ Very little
☐ Some ☐ None

Why? _____

APPENDIX B

NARRATIVE/DESCRIPTIVE RATING SCALE

I. Sequence/Coherence--criteria for rating:

- 1 pt. There is no clear temporal (chronological) order to the events in the narrative. The reader is not sure which event comes first or follows any other event. In fact a sequence may not be related at all. The paper may be purely expository or descriptive.
- 2 pt. There is a noticeable beginning and end although the temporal order of events may not be clear. Events are merely listed rather than progressively and logically related to each other. Sentences and paragraphs are poorly tied together. There are lapses in coherence; or, if transitions are used, they may be used incorrectly or repetitiously.
- 3 pt. The temporal order of events is clear. Transitions are used correctly. The paper has continuity and there is a clear progression of ideas although there may be minor lapses in motivation and logic.
- 4 pt. This paper has all the elements of a "3" paper, with the addition of a sense of control from beginning to end. The sequencing of events is so well done that the reader has a sense of movement. There is a logical progression of ideas. Transitions may be expertly used and movement facilitated by a variety of transitions. The paper is often interesting, original and may include conflict.

II. Setting--criteria for rating:

- 1 pt. The setting of the narrative is not clear to the reader because: 1) the writer does not specify where or when the action is taking place; 2) the reader is unable to infer the setting from the information included in the narrative. The setting is so vague, general and unspecific that the reader has no image of time or place.
- 2 pt. The setting of the narrative is apparent to the reader. The actual place or time is stated or inferred, but there is little or no elaboration.
- 3 pt. The reader has a clear understanding of setting. The setting is more explicitly stated than in a "2" paper. Details may relate to geographic location, time period, or general environment through which the characters move.
- 4 pt. This paper includes all the elements of a "3" paper, with the addition of excellent use of detail. The writer uses specific detail to describe the setting. The setting is so developed that it seems to give the events a "real" place in which to happen. The setting is an important component in furthering the narrative.

III. Characterization--criteria for rating:

- 1 pt. Characters are not identified or only barely identified: by name, noun, pronoun or there may be one or more adjectives which act like labels. However, there is no conscious attempt to develop the characters through their speech, actions, reactions to other characters or other characters' reactions to them.
- 2 pt. Compared to a "1" paper, this narrative includes more information about one or more characters but this information is not elaborated. Details may only be listed, not developed. Characters are not clearly established.
- 3 pt. Detail, interpretive comments, specific actions and reactions of the characters may be included. One or more of the characters may be a stereotype. Character is established and a specific direction for development is indicated.
- 4 pt. One or more of the characters in the narrative may emerge as a unique, attention-getting person. A specific character is well-developed through dialogue, action, reactions to other characters, or by descriptions and/or interpretations of the character's appearance, feelings or thoughts.

IV. Sentence Structure/Diction--criteria for rating:

- 1 pt. Sentences are garbled, incomplete. Numerous structural problems interfere with the reader's comprehension. The sentences are not coherent; words are merely strung together. Monosyllabic words are used and the vocabulary is childish.
- 2 pt. Sentences may be short and choppy or run-on. There may be fragments and comma splices. Word choice is limited. Words may be used incorrectly, repetitiously and inaccurately.
- 3 pt. The sentences read without noticeable breaks and there is variety in sentence structure. There may be some sentence errors but the paper is fluent. Word choice is exact and appropriate although uninspired. There may be several cliches and overworked expressions. The paper may be stilted or inflated.
- 4 pt. The paper has mature sentences making it easy and pleasing to read. It is marked by strong and precise diction. Vivid descriptive words which suit the writer's purpose are used.

V. Grammar/Spelling--criteria for rating:

- 1 pt. There are numerous grammatical errors (e.g., agreement, pronoun reference, misplaced modifiers, tense shift, punctuation) which interfere with the paper's readability. The writer seems to have no grasp of basic spelling rules.

- 2 pt. This paper is readable although the grammatical errors are distracting. There are several spelling errors in common words.
- 3 pt. The paper is basically competent. Errors are noticeable but they do not interfere with the writer's message. Spelling errors occur in words that are harder to spell.
- 4 pt. This paper has very few or no grammatical or spelling errors. The errors that remain make little difference to the reader; they are editorial problems and slips.

APPENDIX C

APPENDIX C

Inter-Rater Reliability

TABLE A
Analysis of Variance Source Table for Sequence Subscale

Source	F	df	MS	Estimates of Variance Components
Subjects (S)	8.81	113	2.88	.4254
Topics (T)		1	4.42	.0117
Raters (R)	1.16	2	.38	.0002
SxT	1.84	113	.62	.0951
SxR		226	.33	.1634
TxR	0.40	2	.13	-.0018
SxTxR		226	.34	.3378

TABLE B
Analysis of Variance Source Table For Setting Subscale

Source	F	df	MS	Estimates of Variance Components
Subjects (S)	8.80	113	316.58	.4139
Topics (T)		1	10.07	.0280
Raters (R)	5.32	2	3.39	.0060
SxT	2.71	113	76.75	.1430
SxR		226	71.93	.1591
TxR	.22	2	.11	-.0017
SxTxR		226	56.50	.2450

TABLE C
Analysis of Variance Source Table for Characterization Subscale

Source	F	df	MS	Estimates of Variance Components
Subjects (S)	9.07	113	2.52	.334
Topics (T)		1	32.90	.0916
Raters (R)	26.65	2	6.62	.0280
SxT	2.14	113	.57	.1014
SxR		226	.25	.1240
TxR	4.66	2	1.24	.0085
SxTxR		226	.27	.2660

TABLE D
Analysis of Variance Source Table for Sentence Structure/Diction
Subscale

Source	F	df	MS	Estimates of Variance Components
Subjects (S)	8.66	113	2.83	.4179
Topics (T)		1	2.11	.0056
Raters (R)	11.80	2	3.06	.0155
SxT	1.64	113	4.18	.0536
SxR		226	3.27	.1635
TxR	.075	2	.02	-.0021
SxTxR		226	.25	.2547

TABLE E
Analysis of Variance Source Table for Grammar/Spelling
Subscale

Source	F	df	MS	Estimates of Variance Components
Subjects (S)	9.44	113	3.66	.5447
Topics (T)		1	2.22	.0057
Raters (R)	33.33	2	12.91	.0055
SxT	1.33	113	.44	.0037
SxR		226	.39	.1936
TxR	.52	2	.17	-.0014
SxTxR		226	.33	.3315

TABLE F
Analysis of Variance Source Table for Total Score

Source	F	df	MS	Estimates of Variance Components
Subjects (S)	15.94	113	57.81	9.030
Topics (T)		1	193.77	.5533
Raters (R)	16.72	2	60.65	.2501
SxT	2.22	113	6.89	1.2618
SxR		226	3.63	1.8137
TxR	.57	2	1.76	-.0118
SxTxR		226	3.10	3.1047

REFERENCES

STUDY 2

References

- Atkinson, R. C. Computer-based instruction in initial reading. In Proceedings of the Sixty-Seventh Invitational Conference on Testing Problems. Princeton: Educational Testing Service, 1968.
- Ausubel, D. The Psychology of Meaningful Verbal Behavior. New York: Grune and Stratton, 1963.
- Baker, E. L., Quellmalz, E. Research-Based Techniques for Instructional Design. Washington, D.C.: National Center for Educational Research and Development, 1972.
- Beez, W. W. Influences of biased psychological reports on teacher behavior and pupil performance. In Proceedings of the Seventy-Sixth Annual Convention of The American Psychological Association, 1968, 605-606.
- Bellamy, G. T. The pygmalion effect: What teacher behaviors mediate it. Psychology in the Schools, 12, 1975, 454-461.
- Berliner, D., Rosenshine, B. Acquisition of Knowledge in the Classroom. Technical Report VI-I, Beginning Teacher Evaluation Study Technical Report Series. San Francisco: Far West Regional Laboratory for Educational Research, February 1976.
- Beshoar, B. B. The condition of student learning. American Education, 12, 1976, 19-22.
- Bloom, B. S. Human Characteristics and School Learning. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1976.
- Bloom, B. S. Time and learning. American Psychologist, 29, 1974, 682-688.
- Brophy, J., Good, T. Teachers' communication of differential expectations for children's classroom performance: some behavioral data. Journal of Educational Psychology, 5, 1970, 365-374.
- Carroll, J. B. A model of school learning. Teachers College Record, 64, 1963, 723-733.
- Chang, S. S. and Rath, J. The school's contribution to the cumulating deficit. Journal of Educational Research, 64, 1971, 272-276.
- Chapanis, A. Knowledge of performance as an incentive in repetitive and monotonous tasks. Journal of Applied Psychology, 48, 1965, 263-267.
- Coffman, W. On the reliability of essay examinations in English. Research in the Teaching of English, 5, 1971, 24-36.
- Cooley, W. and Leinhart, G. The application of a model for investigating classroom processes. 1975.

- Daly, J. A., Miller, M. D. The empirical development of an instrument to measure writing apprehension. Research in the Teaching of English, 9, 1975, 242-249.
- Duchastel, P. C., Merrill, P. F. The effect of behavioral objectives on learning: a review of empirical studies. Review of Educational Research, 43, 1975, 53-69.
- Dunkin, M. J., Biddle, B. J. The Study of Teaching. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1974.
- Frase, L. T. Boundary conditions for mathemagenic behaviors. Review of Educational Research, 40, 1970, 337-348
- Gagne, R. M., and Briggs, L. J. Principles of Instructional Design. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1974.
- Glaser, J. I. The development of the Glaser Narrative Composition Scale. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation. Ohio State, 1972.
- Glaser, R. Toward a behavioral science base for instructional design. In R. Glaser (Ed.), Teaching Machines and Programmed Learning II: Data and Directions. National Education Association, 1963, 771-806.
- Glaser, R. Adapting the elementary school curriculum to individual performance. In Proceedings of the 1967 Invitational Conference on Testing Problems. Princeton: Educational Testing Service, 1968.
- Good, T. L., Biddle, B. I., Brophy, J. E. Teachers Make A Difference. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1975.
- Harris, A. J., Serwer, B. L. Comparison of Reading Approaches in First-Grade Teaching with Disadvantaged Children (the staff project). U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Cooperative Research Project, No. 2677, 1966.
- Hartley, J., and Davies, I. K. Preinstructional strategies: the role of pretests, behavioral objectives, overviews and organizers. Review of Educational Research, 46, 1976, 239-265.
- Jensen, A. Review of Pygmalion in the Classroom. American Scientist, 51, 1969, 44A-45A.
- Los Angeles City Schools. Contemporary Composition: A Grade Outline for Grade 10 or 11. 1976.
- McColly, W. What does educational research say about the judging of writing ability? Journal of Educational Research, 64, 1970, 148-156.
- Mead, M. How we can help children learn to write. Redbook, 148, 63-64.
- Meichenbaum, D., Bowers, K., Ross, R. A behavioral analysis of the teacher expectancy effect. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 13, 1969, 306-316.

- Mellon, J. C. Round two of the national assessment--interpreting the apparent decline of writing ability: a review. Research in the Teaching of English, 10, 1976, 66-74.
- National Assessment of Educational Progress. Writing Mechanics 1969-1974. U. S. Government Printing Office, 1975.
- Popham, W. J., and Baker, E. L. Systematic Instruction. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1970.
- Rosenshine, B. Teaching behaviors related to pupil achievement: a review of research. In I. Westbury, A. Bellack (Eds.), Research in Classroom Processes: Recent Developments and Next Steps. New York: Teachers College Press, 1972, 51-100.
- Rosenshine, B., and Furst, N. The use of direct observation to study teaching. In R. M. W. Travers (Ed.), Second Handbook of Research on Teaching. Chicago: Rand McNally, 1973, 122-183.
- Rosenthal, R., and Jacobsen, L. Pygmalion in the Classroom. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968.
- Rothbart, M., Dalfen, S., Barrett, R. Effects of teachers' expectations on student-teacher interaction. Journal of Educational Psychology, 62, 1971, 49-54.
- Rothkopf, E. Z., and Kaplan, R. Exploration of the effect of density and specificity of instructional objectives on learning from text. Journal of Educational Psychology, 63, 1972, 295-302.
- Sassenrath, J. M. Theory and results on feedback and retention. Journal of Educational Psychology, 67, 1975, 894-899.
- Soar, R. S. Follow Through Classroom Process Measurement and Pupil Growth (1970-71): Final Report. Gainesville, Fla: College of Education, University of Florida, 1973.
- Squire, J. R., and Appelbee, R. K. A Study of English Programs in Selected High Schools Which Consistently Educate Outstanding Students in English. Department of Health, Education and Welfare. Cooperative Research Project No. 1944, 1966.
- Stallings, J. A., and Kaskowitz, D. Follow Through Classroom Observation Evaluation 1972-1973. Menlo Park, Calif: Stanford Research Institute, 1974.
- Thorndike, R. L. Review of Pygmalion in the Classroom. American Educational Research Journal, 5, 1965, 708-711.
- Wallen, N. E., Travers, R. M. W. Analysis and investigation of teaching methods. In N. L. Gage (Ed.), Handbook of Research on Teaching. Chicago: Rand McNally, 1963, 448-505.
- Webster, W., and Nimitz, G. Department of Education: student writing and the state. California English, 12, 1976, 34-35.